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## **Teacher Leadership Development: An exploration of issues arising from programmes in Scotland and New Zealand**

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### **ABSTRACT**

There is growing awareness of the contribution teachers can make to school leadership, particularly in relation to improvements in curriculum and pedagogy. Teacher leadership offers the potential to engage teachers in bottom-up approaches to school improvement and liberate the professional creativity of teachers. Despite such positioning, clearer conceptualisation is needed of 'teacher leadership', its espoused purposes and practice realities. Through this, better understanding can emerge of how willing and interested teachers can be supported to develop their leadership capabilities. This article reports on early findings from a small-scale exploratory experiential investigation in two education systems of similar size, Scotland and New Zealand, investigating how those teachers conceptualise teacher leadership and its practice. The study is intended to contribute to our understandings of the motivations and barriers that face teachers involved in developing their leadership capacities. The article explores some implications for policy and practice as we look to unlock teacher leadership potential.

**KEY WORDS:** teacher leadership, distributed leadership, continuing teacher education, career long professional learning

### **INTRODUCTION**

Over the past two decades, in the drive to identify school leadership models and practices which lead to increased impact on outcomes, teacher leadership has become a major theme within policy, research and literature located within a distributed leadership paradigm (Harris, 2004; Mangin and Stoelinga, 2008). This drive espouses what Murphy (2005, p.18) describes as "participatory governance", placing central importance on "instructionally focused leadership" (p. vii) which promotes "professional empowerment [as well as] an orientation toward accountability through 'professionalisation' and 'power distribution'" (p. 41) rather than bureaucratic control. Within this perspective, building on the work of Timperley (2009) and Spillane and Coldren (2011), Torrance (2013) argues that leadership is perceived as a relationship of social influence in which expertise, rather than formal position, forms the basis of authority. This conceptualization of teacher leadership is inclusive of, but wider than, narrower conceptualisations in which teachers are only seen to exercise leadership within delegated roles, have leadership positions distributed to them, or engage in leadership activity as a stepping stone to a formal leadership position within a management/leadership hierarchy. These more formal ways, in which only some teachers might be designated 'teacher leaders', clearly encompass some aspects of 'teacher leadership', but not the broader, 'bottom-up' creativity of the wider concept, which might be seen as open to and characteristic of all teachers.

The policy endorsement of teacher leadership within the revised professional standards in Scotland (General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2012a) treats the concept of teacher leadership as unproblematic and obscures such complexities of definition and practice. A clearer conceptualisation of 'teacher leadership' and its espoused purposes is needed. One of the underlying conceptual problems with teacher leadership arises from potential overlap with the hierarchical positioning of leadership within school structures (Fitzgerald and Gunter, 2008). The authors make the point that "while leadership might be distributed in schools, we seriously question whether power has been similarly distributed" (p. 332). Leadership involves power, but some of that power is less formal and structured; not distributed from above, but given by those who are influenced or choose to follow. This gives leadership a flexibility and creativity that formal hierarchical management may lack, but leadership power can also be volatile and uncontrolled in its actions and impact (O'Brien, 2016, p. xiii-xiv). The term 'teacher leaders' suggests a defined sub-group of teachers, implying that perhaps there are other teachers who are not leaders. The term 'teacher leadership' includes 'teacher leaders' but opens up possibilities of the more flexible bottom-up professional creativity and influence, open to all teachers. Teacher leadership does not occur in isolation, but rather is facilitated and constrained by many factors, and enabled and supported by those in formal leadership positions. Beyond the complexities of the concept, much remains to be explored about the practice realities of teacher leadership and how teachers can be supported to develop their leadership capabilities. In addition to conceptual difficulties with the terms used, there is a lack of empirical research into how teachers themselves, particularly early career teachers, conceptualise and develop their practice of teacher leadership.

This article aims to contribute to improved understanding of teacher leadership through reporting on emerging findings from a small-scale exploratory mixed methods investigation in two education systems of similar size, Scotland and New Zealand. The researchers are guided by the same research questions, adopting a common methodological approach. The study investigates how teachers who are progressing through programmes in developing teacher leadership, conceptualise teacher leadership and its practice. It does not therefore examine teachers in general, but specifically those who are already committed to developing their leadership capacities. The paper first outlines key concepts emerging from a review of selected literature and research in the field of teacher leadership, and from school leadership policy contexts of Scottish and New Zealand education. The research methods that informed the respective studies are described, while research findings from the two countries are compared and contrasted. Major themes that arise from the findings of the joint research project are explored, as are implications for future policy and practice, with a view to enhancing teacher leadership development across both countries.

## **SELECTED LITERATURE**

There is a rich literature developing within the field of teacher leadership including an increasing number of empirical studies making a long overdue contribution to theory building. That said, teacher leadership as a field is still at an early evolutionary stage, representing "a theory in action" (Murphy, 2005, p. 46). Moreover, different studies in the field may lean toward a broader, more inclusive conceptualisation of teacher leadership outlined above, or towards a narrower understanding, for example linking teacher leadership specifically to goal-directed school improvement or seeing 'teacher leaders' as a subset within the wider population of teachers. This conceptual elision underpins some of the continuing difficulties of the developing field. For the purposes of this paper, four key themes will be explored: teacher leadership dispositions; personal and professional elements of teacher identity; the influential role of the school leader; and barriers those seeking to develop their leadership capacities encounter in early career stages.

Among numerous listings that describe the dispositions of those exercising teacher leadership, Danielson (2007), using the term ‘teacher leaders’, identified nine contributory characteristics: deep commitment to student learning, optimism and enthusiasm, open-mindedness and humility, courage and willingness to take risks, confidence and decisiveness, tolerance for ambiguity, creativity and flexibility, perseverance, and willingness to work hard. In this regard, Hunzicker (2013), who also uses the term ‘teacher leaders’, cites two studies which demonstrate how the dispositions are revealed in their actions. One study of administrative intern candidates by Brown, King and Herron (2008) reported a high level of consistency between candidates’ beliefs and behaviours. Weasmer, Woods and Coburn (2008) studied 30 teachers seen to be in the ‘Enthusiastic and Growing Career Stage’ of the teacher career cycle model of Fessler & Christensen (1992). They found that all respondents had an ‘intrinsic drive towards self-improvement’ in relation to life-long learning, improved teaching practice, and often engaged in leadership of different types. However, it is generally acknowledged that learning the different ways in which teachers can exercise leadership is a complex, non-linear and often ambiguous process.

As part of teachers’ development of leadership capacities, the themes of personal and professional identities (who they are, their self-image, meanings they attach to themselves) have been well canvassed in the extant literature, and are important considerations as we seek to understand the person behind the teacher.

**TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS OF PRINCIPALS WHO PROMOTE TEACHER LEADERSHIP**

Communicate a clear strategic intent	Model futuristic thinking; provide a safe environment for exploration and experimentation; show the linking of visioning to knowledge creation
Incorporate the aspirations and ideas of others	Demonstrate confidence in teachers’ professional capabilities; help teachers clarify their personal values; explore the alignment between strategic and educational values
Pose difficult-to-answer questions	Heighten the level of professional dialogue about educational practices; encourage individual commitment from alienated teachers
Make space for individual innovation	Create opportunities for individual expression; encourage identification of – and confrontation of – institutional barriers
Know when to step back	Demonstrate trust; illuminate how power can and should be distributed; acknowledge the importance of the individual professional; attest to the central place of teaching in school decision-making
Create opportunities out of perceived difficulties	Demonstrate ways in which knowledge may be created; encourage thinking outside the box
Build on achievements to create a culture of success	Model positive problem solving; create an ethos of teachers as guardians of the school culture; demonstrate that from little acorns, big oak trees can grow

[Source: Crowther *et al.* 2002, p. 65]

For Day, Sammons, Stobart *et al.* (2007), there is a certain inescapability in acknowledging the “unavoidable interrelationship between professional and personal, cognitive and emotional identities” (p.105), particularly in the professional life phase years (8-15) where teachers typically are called upon to manage changes in role and identity (Sammons, Day, Kington *et al.* (2007). For example, Hargreaves (2005, p. 971) found that early career teachers often struggled to define and delineate the relationship between their personal and professional

identities, identities that are themselves changing as they come to terms with the demands of 'an uncertain and insecure occupational environment', whereas more established teachers tended to experience less frustration, were more resilient and confident in dealing with how changes impacted on them (cited in Leitch, 2010, p. 330). This is particularly evident when early career teachers are establishing their professional identity with teaching colleagues, students and parents. It is a symbiotic and authentic linkage in which teachers "combine their professional craft expertise with their personal selves in their work" (Day and Gu, 2010, p. 38).

What are some of the optimal conditions that may promote the prospect of teacher leadership in the eyes of those who wish to exert more influence? Day and Gu (2010) point to the prominent part played by the school headteacher/principal in teachers' successful professional growth. They highlight formal school leaders' attributes such as commitment, trustworthiness, collaboration, sharing a school-wide vision with staff and building "a school culture that promotes teachers' collective agency, efficacy and professional learning and development" (p. 155). In the same way, Steel and Craig (2006) proffered similar strategies that aid the development of teacher leadership capacities, such as two-way conversations with their teachers and acknowledging teachers' experience and professional judgement. Finally, Crowther, Kagan, Fergusson *et al.* (2002) offer a tabular summary of how principals might foster teacher leadership through different motivational strategies set out in Table 1 overleaf.

Danielson (2007) identifies two further factors which facilitate the development of leadership capacities. First, the opportunity to learn leadership skills in areas of teaching such as curriculum planning, instructional improvement, collaboration and facilitation. These skills could be enhanced through in-school development or through University-based courses. Second, the removal of obstacles such as the *tall poppy syndrome* – where "those who stick their heads up risk being cut down to size" (Danielson, 2007, p. 19) - characteristic of Scotland as well as Australasia (Craig 2011). In these instances, school leaders need to create a supportive or 'enabling' culture that respects and encourages teachers who are willing to move beyond traditional classroom roles and show initiative, take the lead or take on new responsibilities and challenges.

This is only one of the potential barriers identified in the literature that teachers interested in developing and exercising their leadership capacities may confront. There can be immense pressure from peer teachers. Colleagues can "wield an immense power to extinguish a teacher's involvement in school leadership" (Barth, 2001, p. 446). Dawson's (2014) three-year Australian study of experienced teachers learning to lead reinforces the need for those taking on leadership roles to feel free from collegial sanction. He cites one teacher for whom this was very important:

Taking on a teacher leadership role was very challenging for me. I got to the stage where I would have done anything for a change but while I needed a change, I said to [principal's name] that I was not prepared to be 'hung out to dry'. We have got a group of teachers at our school who crucify anything new and anyone associated with it (Dawson, 2014, p. 111).

Given the lack of empirically based literature on teacher leadership within the Scottish and New Zealand contexts, this study was designed to explore how those beginning to exercise leadership understood the experience.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was designed as a small-scale exploratory mixed methods inter-country research investigation into teacher leadership. It was guided by the following research questions, which sought to explore both the broader concept of 'teacher leadership' and issues involved in its actualisation in specific situations, where teachers undertook leadership roles and might be seen in their school as 'teacher leaders':

- How do (early career) teachers conceptualise 'teacher leadership'?
- What motivates (early career) teachers to aspire to become 'teacher leaders'?
- What positive aspects do (early career) teachers associate with a teacher leadership role?
- What barriers do (early career) teachers encounter in the formative stages of developing their teacher leader role?
- How do the research findings contribute to our understandings of professional leadership development?

The research study employed an emergent research design that approximates Maykut and Morehouse's (1994) adaptive model. This sits within an interpretive paradigm of multiple realities for both observer and observed (Morrison, 2002). The study used a multi-site case study of early career teacher leaders in the Otago and Central Scotland regions that reflect geographical and socio-cultural differences, in order to achieve maximum variation in sampling (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

In the Scottish study, the researchers engaged with 22 teachers across two Local Authorities, with an average of nine years teaching experience who had participated in a 20 credit equivalent Masters-level teacher leadership professional development course in session 2014 to 2015. In the New Zealand study, the researcher engaged with eight early career teachers in eight schools in the Otago region who had participated in a two-day professional development course in teacher leadership in 2015 and 2016. Due to the small sample size and participant self-reporting, the study's findings cannot be generalised to wider populations of teachers, but should rather be seen more in terms of reconstructed meanings that provide insight into teachers' leadership thinking and experiences.

A mixed-methods approach enabled data collection through an open-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview format. The entry-point questionnaire aimed to elicit teachers' reasons for participating in a teacher leadership course, and their thinking and experiences about the field of teacher leadership, particularly about key opportunities and challenges they anticipated. A set of interview questions was later administered to gather data from both countries' participants on their motivations, readiness and understanding of teacher leadership; their direct/indirect experiences of teacher leadership to date; and anticipated or actual barriers that might stand in their way of exercising leadership. In order to collect qualitative data that provided rich contextual insights, individual semi-structured interviews were conducted on site or by telephone with early career teachers, using pre-prepared interview schedules based on life/career histories and leadership experiences. The Scottish teachers were a self-selected group of seven, chosen from an original group of nine who volunteered to contribute to the research to ensure a spread of gender, sector and range of leadership experience. Interviews were transcribed and respondent-validated by the participants. Constant comparative analysis of the data proceeded concurrently with the collection of data from those interviewed in a process of inductive cross-case analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study's five research questions provide the framework within which we present the respective findings. These findings will be reported under the headings of teacher leadership conceptualisations, professional values and prior experiences, career motivations, barriers and positive influences in the formative stages of developing teacher leadership.

### SCOTLAND

#### *Conceptualisation of teacher leadership*

For Scottish respondents, the concept of teacher leadership centred on: a collegial model exercising 'influence' not 'power' within side-by-side rather than hierarchical relationships; exhibiting behaviours such as confidence, enthusiasm and maintaining a positive outlook; being generous and ready to share; being skilful with people, actively listening, encouraging,

modelling rather than telling; putting pupils first: "After you've spoken to someone like that, you come away feeling better."

Respondents were anxious to distance 'leadership' from 'management', seeing teacher leadership as voluntary, requiring to be perceived by peers as professionally credible, involving for example, specific expertise. These characteristics of teacher leadership were often seen in contrast to leadership exercised through positions of authority or power in the management hierarchy of the school organisation.

### *Prior leadership experiences*

In describing the influencing leadership behaviours of teachers, respondents often referred to teachers they knew who demonstrated teacher leadership in action. In some cases, they distinguished between their own experiences of 'teacher leadership' and 'delegated leadership' (which some might consider a form of distributed leadership). In contrast, there were teachers whose influence (and leadership) was felt to be negative: "often saying things that undermine other people, either their confidence or their ability".

The inclusion of teacher leadership along with an explicit set of professional values positioned within the new professional standards of Scottish teachers, was perceived by respondents as positive although there was an assumption that initial teacher education programmes were preparing new teachers both for teacher leadership expectations and associated practices:

I have hope in the new teachers and the new input they are getting. ... perhaps the new teachers are more prepared for it... so if it is part of the formation then it will become part of the profession.

### *Motivation to lead*

The sources of influence that motivated teachers to want to lead were both *extrinsic*, such as seeking to have an influence on others for the good of the children and generating possibilities of being better placed for promotion; and *intrinsic* such as with the drive to become a better teacher, seeking to be more confident, more aware of the social and political aspects of the job, and having a more fulfilling role. The primary motivation involved seeking to have a greater influence (beyond one classroom) in helping pupils to learn and develop:

I want to influence the way the school develops and improves... that's a huge thing - not just to support an individual child but to make a difference for the majority of pupils in the school.

### *Barriers to teacher leadership*

School culture was highlighted by the Scottish respondents as playing an important part with teacher leadership perceived as being less likely to thrive in schools where too much is going on with too many clamant priorities eating constantly into teachers' time; where there exists a top-down feel to the demands placed on teachers leaving insufficient space for teacher-level initiative:

It is always pointed out what hasn't been done, so we are always trying to catch up with workload, bureaucracy ... the expectation seems to be unrealistic

School culture could also create a barrier to teacher leadership where a private teaching culture exists in which teachers do not share professional values or concerns, and in which they may have good social relationships but these are not extended into open and trusting professional collegial relationships:

Some staff members looking at people who have maybe not been in school long and saying "why should I listen to that person?" and there's maybe not enough knowledge among staff. They don't know others well enough and they're saying why that person and not me? There needs to be respect among staff and negative attitudes like that can be a barrier.

### *Support factors for teacher leaders*

The Scottish respondents also identified school culture as having the potential to facilitate and support the development of teacher leadership, perceived as flourishing in open, collegial, sharing cultures: “collegiality and trust are the key words”; “there has to be an open and trusting relationship between teachers and formal leaders if teachers are to get the right kind of support.”

Despite the policy positioning, a facilitative school culture built upon a clear understanding of teacher leadership was not, however, a given:

In my school the concept of teacher leadership is very undeveloped ... only one person has a grasp of the concept and that's not the headteacher. It's therefore difficult for people to take on a teacher leadership role when it is not well understood.

## **NEW ZEALAND**

### *Conceptualisation of teacher leadership*

For New Zealand respondents, the concept of teacher leadership centred on their perspectives of curriculum functions, experiential learning and collaborative leadership. They saw a clear first-step in their leadership progression by taking up curriculum responsibilities, for example, in a junior syndicate (Year 1-3 students) or Outdoor Education programmes at secondary school. Several teachers believed that they needed three to five years of teaching experience to gain “a set of tools” to master any future leadership role. In turn, experiential learning would help establish their leadership credentials in the eyes of colleagues. Collaborative leadership also featured in their conceptualisations, rather than a managerial role of directing people. In order to effect this concept of shared leadership, one teacher understood that a range of leadership styles may be required:

To me, that means leading your colleagues through new learning so, as a teacher leader, you can either go alongside them, you can go amongst them or you can lead them from the front. And it's when you've got the information or the knowledge or the passion for something ... you'd like to pass that on.

### *Prior leadership experiences*

A common message that came through from interviewees was the extent to which participants perceived that leadership was a formally mandated position with publically acknowledged responsibilities, and that they themselves had little or no leadership experience to date. Yet, on closer examination, this was not the case. For example, one teacher had organised pet days and junior syndicate meetings in her rural primary school, and was a staff member of the Board of Trustees; another teacher was supervising first-year student trainees and was in charge of sports management within the school; and a secondary teacher had been a pastoral Dean, a team leader in Social Sciences, and had led a Geography programme in an international school.

### *Motivation to lead*

The sources of influence that motivated teachers to want to lead were varied. One teacher had been encouraged by her deputy principal appraiser to attend a professional development course as she showed leadership potential. An older teacher wanted to share her 23 years of teaching experience with younger staff. Other teachers shared their enjoyment of working with children and adults, and the chance to make a difference in the wider school community. They saw leadership as a pathway for this and for attempting professional challenges in their job: “I really like to innovate and create ways to move forward.” Yet, while a number of teachers viewed themselves as motivators for change, there was still a tension for them between remaining in the relative safety of leading classroom learning and “stepping up” into a more uncertain world of leadership beyond.



### *Barriers to teacher leadership*

There were both professional and personal barriers revealed by this sample of aspiring teacher leaders. In the professional domain, there seemed to be limited leadership opportunities made available for newcomers in schools with stable staffing. Here, leadership responsibilities remained vested in those in formal leadership positions. Another professional challenge for one teacher lay with a perceived leadership prospect of dealing with legal issues at school e.g. enforcing a court restriction on a parent when they wanted to watch the school cross-country.

In the personal domain, some interviewees were lacking in leadership confidence, brought about by self-perceptions that they were young and new, and an awareness of the experience gap between themselves and older staff: "Will people want to be led by me?" For example, one teacher had been given responsibility for looking after gifted and talented students. She shared that she did not manage well emotionally in her interactions with teachers who were 20 years older. She remembers experiencing acute feelings of disapproval from older teachers thinking "Well, who's this upstart who's just been appointed to the job?" An associated apprehension was noted by the teacher sample in regard to dealing with staff conflict when in a teacher leader role. For another teacher, her barrier lay in learning to deal with staff resistance to change *i.e.* dealing with colleagues' stubbornness and realising that, no matter what the teacher leader does, "they still won't agree with you."

### *Support factors for teacher leaders*

It was very apparent that mentoring assistance was a major support factor required: "For anything that's new and unfamiliar, it would be great to have support around you." Consistent calls were made for a formalised leadership mentoring system that matched experienced teachers with the aspiring teacher leader, a form of professional support whereby teachers are scaffolded out of their comfort zone to undertake new learning about new roles.

Other support factors included giving teacher leaders real responsibility so that they can actually demonstrate leadership capability; making available professional development opportunities to foster leadership understanding and skill development; and having the time to undertake leadership functions. In this regard, for some teachers, it was a question of work-life balance: "Do I want to be putting the extra in for my own benefit, not financially, but just satisfaction? Or do I want to go away in the weekends and have a life?" Another factor was based around the public support of senior leaders for their teacher leadership role. One teacher pointed to the negative effects of a lack of support for her leadership role, with ramifications for her future leadership practice: "That lack of support means that there's lots of people like me who would have been prepared to lead a school but think I don't know if I can be bothered...".

## **DISCUSSION**

Cross-case analysis of Scottish and New Zealand data produced a set of parallel findings in regard to how teachers perceived teacher leadership as a concept, and as practice within their respective schools. 'Teacher leadership' was seen as a collaborative concept where one works alongside colleagues in a non-hierarchical way. Having specific curriculum expertise was acknowledged as a useful pre-requisite for leading, reinforcing Torrance and Humes' (2014) assertion that leadership is "located in the many rather than the few and located close to the classroom" (p. 294). Overall, respondents viewed teacher leadership as a particular form of democratic leadership rather than an authoritative style of leadership perceived to exist in senior leadership teams. This distributed view of teacher leadership is also embedded within flatter collegial management structures and broader communities of practice (Storey, 2004).

However, there were differences in how teachers perceived their previous leadership thinking and experiences. In Scotland, perceptions were framed in terms of positive and negative teacher role models, and the expectations behind the formal professionalisation of teacher leadership within the new professional standards for **all** Scottish teachers. In

comparison, New Zealand respondents understood that 'leadership' was associated with those in mandated positions of responsibility such as Heads of Department, and Assistant/Deputy Principals. Hence, they did not see themselves as 'leading' in any formal sense, despite clear evidence that they were engaged in leadership roles at different levels of the school<sup>1</sup>. It is probable that the Scottish teachers have a clearer definition of teacher leadership on account of their postgraduate interrogation of policy discourse and its inclusion in their professional standards, whereas there is no such formal recognition of that leadership in the New Zealand education system.

There were similar motivations expressed across both systems in teachers' desire to lead others. At the heart of extrinsic motivation lay the goal of influencing children's learning and making a difference to learning in the wider school community. Both sets of respondents noted that exercising leadership could enhance their job satisfaction and expose them to new challenges in a positive manner. In this way, teachers can be professionally empowered through opportunities to grow and develop their leadership potential (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Murphy, 2005).

What were the enablers and barriers that teachers saw to their successful exercise of leadership, whether in formal roles or through collegial influence? It was evident in both systems, that a supportive school culture was crucial to the exercise of teacher leadership. Supportive features included public support from the principal, collegial relationships, trust building, mentoring assistance, relevant professional development opportunities, and adequate time allocation to undertake the work. Conversely, teacher leadership barriers identified in a non-supportive school environment included time constraints, other teachers' unwillingness to follow where a colleague was leading, and an apprehension about learning to negotiate their way through staff conflict and resistance to change. This area of concern has been previously reported in Dawson's (2014) Australian study.

This, then, focuses attention on the theme of teacher resilience in the face of uncertain responses. In this study, Scottish and New Zealand teachers have signalled what they believe to be significant obstacles to their leadership pathways. These obstacles impact on their confidence levels and their ability to cope with a leadership role that is multidimensional and potentially threatening. Part of the challenge may lie in making the transition between their teacher identity and their potential professional identity as a leader (Johnson, Down, Le Cornu, Peters *et al.*, 2015; Leitch, 2010; Notman, in press). Britzman (1986) succinctly describes this tension as a difficult process "of making sense of, and acting within, self-doubt, uncertainty and the unexpected, while assuming a role which requires confidence, certainty and stability" (p. 452). The Scottish teachers, who were developing through a postgraduate programme, exposing them to a variety of conceptualisations and experiences, were articulate and confident in expressing a fluid, creative concept of leadership as a property shared across the profession and rooted in professional credibility, expertise and good interpersonal relationships.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY**

There are implications arising from this study's findings for policy makers in the respective countries. In New Zealand, there is an emerging need to direct more policy attention to the preparation and support of teachers seeking to develop their leadership skills, as a stepping stone to more formal leadership positions. All current New Zealand leadership initiatives focus on principalship and provide professional support for aspiring and first-time principals. As yet, there are no nationally mandated professional programmes designed to assist middle and teacher leaders in what Pounder and Crow (2005) describe as the "Leadership Pipeline." It is left to the discretion of local educational leadership development providers to offer, for example, two and four-day professional development courses for teacher and middle leaders in their

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1. This finding replicates Fairman and McKenzie's (2014) case studies of teachers involved in leadership activity in seven schools in Maine (USA) in which the teachers were reluctant to see themselves as 'leaders'.

region. The absence of any formal preparation programme for middle and teacher leadership development “may be another disincentive for teachers to begin on a career path towards school leadership” (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Conversely, in the Scottish policy context, the education system is currently undergoing a programme of reform. This began with the Scottish Government’s commissioned review of teacher education, *Teaching Scotland’s Future* (Donaldson, 2011), which recommended a ‘re-professionalisation’ of the teaching profession. The General Teaching Council for Scotland subsequently published a suite of revised professional standards addressing the significant career phases of: initial preparation and induction into the profession; career long teacher development; leadership and management including a revised *Standard for Headship* and a new *Standards for Middle Leadership and Management* (GTCS, 2012 a, b, c). The core *Standard for Full Registration*, compulsory for all teachers, specifically requires Scottish teachers to be prepared to exercise professional leadership, whether in specific leadership roles or not, though the negotiation of what this might mean in specific contexts is underexplored:

All teachers should have opportunities to be leaders. They lead learning for, and with, all learners with whom they engage. (GTCS, 2012a, p.2)

Moreover, GTC Scotland (2012a, p.6) sets out clear expectations for the personal commitment of every Scottish teacher in relation to “working collegiately” and “Committing to lifelong enquiry, learning, professional development and leadership as core aspects of professionalism and collaborative practice”. This comprehensive revision of professional standards forms a strategic element of the ‘re-professionalisation’ process, encoding policy intentions (Taylor 1997) as part of a national strategy to up-skill the teaching profession, redefining the role of the teacher to reflect wider expectations and demands. To support this policy implementation, the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL), in partnership with Universities and Local Authorities, is supporting the development and enhancement of existing professional learning provision across the leadership spectrum for teachers, middle leaders and managers, aspirant headteachers (‘Into Headship’) and experienced headteachers (‘In Headship’).

The standards developed in Scotland are part of an innovative, modernisation strategy. However, there is a risk of teacher leadership being perceived as the new ‘silver bullet’ for addressing challenges within Scottish education. Torrance and Forde (2016) caution that there is a danger with using standards as policy tools with a future orientation to realise a wider policy intention to improve outcomes for pupils, reducing the open-ended context-specific practices of teacher leadership to a nationally mandated outcomes-focused practice. In this way, “complex ideas are reduced to sets of competencies”. In their conclusion, Torrance and Forde (2016, p. 15) offer the following counsel:

To move beyond policy rhetoric, teachers need permission, space and tools to debate the ideas underpinning standards and to appreciate them as contested ideas, exploring ways of generating practices in their own context. Standards can help to create space and legitimacy for ideas and practices of teacher leadership and of practitioner enquiry but there is a danger for such processes to become domesticated within a process of policy implementation, where externally generated ideas, policies and strategies are presented to schools and teachers who are expected to simply take these forward. The challenge for those designing and leading continuing teacher education programmes is to ensure that the concepts of teacher leadership and practitioner enquiry are not reduced to sets of techniques to be demonstrated.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

A major implication for teacher leadership development in both New Zealand and Scotland comes in the provision of relevant professional learning, to support teachers in their knowledge base and practice development. Here, an additional aim is to encourage teacher confidence

and build resilience in order to cope with the complexities of leadership outside the security of the classroom.

Four focus areas are recommended to help inform the development of professional learning programmes to assist teachers to develop leadership understandings and skills which they can bring to bear for the benefit of their pupils in a variety of settings. The first area focuses on school improvement, as teacher leadership and professional development are inextricably linked (Poekert, 2012). The second area aims to build teacher leadership capacity within the domain of a professional learning community (Tenuto, Canfield-Davis and Joki, 2012). Within such a community that supports the principle of distributed leadership, the lines of distinction become blurred between teachers and designated leaders (Berry, 2011) as they move between collaborative leadership arrangements.

A third focus area relates to the articulation of change management processes. As the findings of this study suggest, both for teachers themselves and for their leadership work with other staff, a close partnership between headteacher/principal (along with other formal leaders) and the teachers involved is requisite in establishing the teacher's credibility in the eyes of the staff, as the teacher begins to exercise leadership influence beyond the classroom. In addition, it would be particularly useful to consider strategies for understanding and addressing teacher resistance to change.

Finally, a broader consideration relates to a transitional pathway from teacher identity to professional identity. In this regard, Leitch (2010) suggests that greater attention is given to the links between the personal and professional aspects of teacher leadership. She points to an increased focus on leadership learning, where:

Professional development engagements that attend to and embrace a more holistic conception of teachers' identities and the dynamics that flow between the personal, professional and political have the potential to support teachers in re-imagining and reshaping what is possible, across the varied phases of their career (p. 350).

## CONCLUSION

In order to fulfil their potential, teacher leaders need to have a clear sense of their own professional identity encompassing a leadership role, and to feel confident about their own abilities as skilled practitioners. This is particularly the case when overcoming professional barriers and practice limits placed upon them either by colleagues in formal leadership positions or by peers. As such, teachers aspiring to influence through leadership need to understand the wider school organisation and the processes of social influence involved in enacting leadership without the conferment of a formal position within school hierarchies. Central to this is a professional development process where there is a focus on continuous learning for themselves and about themselves. However, they cannot be effective teachers in leadership on their own. There is an onus on each school principal, along with other formal leaders, to support, guide and develop teacher leadership in practice contexts. Similarly, there is an onus on policy makers to target professional development programmes, both to build nation-wide capacity at the foundation stage of the "Leadership Pipeline" and to develop and enhance the quality and influence of the teaching profession as a whole.

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